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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines a comprehensive approach to uncovering the process of second language acquisition, entitled Interlanguage Analysis (IA), and defines the features and aims of this analysis. IA regards the transitional linguistic system from the learner's first language (L1) to the target language (TL) as interlanguage (IL). Language acquisition research needs to examine the common and differing elements of L1, TL, and IL as they relate to the learning and communicative strategies employed by learners. Error analysis needs to focus not only on mistakes but successes as well. The goals of IA include: (1) the establishment of a well-knit theory of foreign language acquisition; (2) the elucidation of teaching and learning methods and materials; and (3) the establishment of a data-bank of universal grammar. Contains 10 references. (MDM)

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INTERLANGUAGE ANALYSIS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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INTERLANGUAGE ANALYSIS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Harumitsu Mizuno

The study of second language acquisition can date back to contrastive analysis from the fifties to the sixties of this century. The basic claim of contrastive analysis theory was that one could predict and describe the areas of difficulty by means of comparing and contrasting two linguistic systems, those of NL and TL (namely, native language and target language).

Since the late sixties it came to be confirmed that there are those other than interference errors from an Ll, the mainstream of research in this field gradually turned toword an error analysis approach. However, some researchers point out several defects in error analysis. For instance, Schachter (1974) claime that "error analysis without CA apriori predictions simply fails to account for the avoidance phenomenon. If the students does not produce the constructions he finds difficult, no amount of error analysis is going to explain why." In addition, Schachter and Celce-Murcia (1977) have referred to six areas in error analysis which exhibit potential weakness are:

(1) the analysis of error in isolation
(2) the classification of identified errors
(3) statements of error frequency
(4) identification of points of difficulty
(5) the ascription of causes to systematic errors
(6) the biased nature of sampling procedures

Moreover, as Long and Sato (1984) mentioned, the error analysis approach focuses on just the products of second language learners. As

a result, it tended to neglect the process and learner's avoidance errors. Furthermore, the analysis falls into subjective point of view, and the term is always shadowed by the nuance of something to analyze only errors. Hence, I wish to propose 'Interlanguage Analysis ', as a comprehensive approach that aims at uncovering the process of second language acquisition. I also define the features of this analysis and the aims of this approach as follows.

1. The Object of the Analysis

1. 1 The linguistic analysis at a process level

Language is basically variable (Bailey, 1973; Bickerton, 1973, 1975; Labov, 1966; Schumann, 1976), and this variability is systematic. Therefore, one of the features of interlanguage analysis is that it regards the transitional linguistic system from the learner's Ll to the TL as interlanguage, and it focuses on the process. This type of analysis may take a longitudinal approach, but it can also be done cross-sectionally, as in my paper on English articles (Mizuno, 1985, 1986). That is to say, if the subjects were obtained through a rigorous sampling procedure setting up at least three groups of learners (Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced levels) based on their score of proficiency test, we can follow the process of learning a specific item.

1. 2 The linguistic analysis on the multi-levels

Contrastive Analysis concentrated their studies on phonological or syntactic levels. It is because they were supposed to be most favor able to show the strong version of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis claiming that it can predict the learner's errors through comparing Ll with L2. On the other hand, Error analysts have focused their studies on syntactic and morphological levels. It is because they were likely to be most fruitful for supporting language universal and natural sequence as well. However, in order to establish a more comprehensive theory of second language acquisition, it is necessary to be involved in hypothesis testing on the multi-levels including vocabulary

level and discorse level.

1. 3 Analysis of interlingual semantic differences

In case of probing the cause of errors, we must consider intricate factors such as learning environment and the variety of TL besides Ll interference and overgeneralization. Henceforth, it is important to clarify the common elements among three languages (viz., Ll, IL and TL), the common elements between two languages (namely, between Ll and IL, IL and TL, and TL and Ll), and the elements inherent in each of them. Such careful work will shed light on the process of semantic development in each level of phoneme, morpheme, syntax, lexime and discourse in the long run.

1. 4 Analysis of strategies involving in language learning

Recent studies on discourse function claim that language learners, when developing the lexical and morphological forms, depend in larger part on various cognitive strategies. Among others, communicative competence rather than grammatical competence is likely to reflect the authentic competency underlying the learners. Therefore, when interpreting the process of interlanguage, it is indispensable to analyze not merely learning strategy but also communicative strategy and discourse strategy as the target.

1. 5 Comprehensive performance analysis

Error analysis has just focused on the negative aspect of the learners. It is necessary, however, with regard to the more positive side, to scrutinize the successful aspect of learner's performance. Furthermore, in order to establish a systematic theory of second language acquisition, it is indispensable to consider not only what the learners produce as errors but also non-error (namely, avoidance error) latent in the flow of their ordinary conversation. Therefore, Interlanguage Analysis approach examine the performance of second language learners from many other angles.

2. Means by Which to Do the Analysis

2. 1 Rigorous empirical control

It is necessary for interlanguage analysis to carry on the introspective investigation based on an objectively controled rational process. The essential condition of the test called for such a scientific rigorous approach is to have the practicability besides validity and sufficient reliability. Hence, the frequency of error does not necessarily show the degree of learning difficulty in a certain item; thus in order to bring out learner's latent errors, it is most advisable to use the learner's internal report about the reason why they made the answer of each item together with elicitation procedure (i.e., a kind of test setting up the condition that must use a specific item in it). In case of using this test, it is also important to use both judgmental test and productive test, and to check the difference in mode between those tests from the data. Such systematic empirical procedure of investigation would illuminate the real aspect of second language acquisition.

2. 2 Bidirectional viewpoints for the analysis

So far most of error analysis have been attempted by researchers who pay no attention to the learner's Ll. As a result, it is pointed out that they considered only leaner's errors, and they have ignored their non-errors. Therefore, in order to elucidate the real entity of the second or foreign language learners, it is indispensable that researcher should be bilingual as the qualification for making interlanguage analysis. It would become possible, when such researchers make analysis on the viewpoints of both teachers and learners, to predict the real cause of error.

3. The Goal of the Study

3 1 Establishing a well-knit theory of foreign language acquisition

Interlanguage Analysis aims to clarify the process of second language acquisition through elucidation of the cognitive process and linguistic competence of learners. As the first step to accomplish that aim we

need the accumulated data indicating precisely how does the acquisition process differ due to the difference of learning condition such as Ll background, the level of L2 and age. In addition, as recent studies on pidgin-creole suggest, the multilateral effort such as carrying on a close relation with the field of sociolinguistic studies or standing on an interdisciplinary viewpoint would bring about fruitful results on the study of second language acquisition.

3. 2 Elucidating teaching/learning of foreign language

Interlanguage Analysis involved in foreign language teaching in the following three points. Thus, (1)the disposal of errors in the classroom (as the question of feedback), (2)the sequence of presentation of materials (as the question of presentation), (3)the production of material and curriculum (as the question of materials). Above all, if the analytic data on the learning of a specific language under a specific learning condition are stocked, they are likely to suggest for the production of the realistic and applicable model for teaching a second or foreign language. It would be useful in making linguistic materials and selecting a teaching method. Moreover, this approach is likely to strengthen the relation of research and teaching.

3. 3 Establishing the data-bank for universal grammar

On the completion of interlingual taxonomy through the analysis of reciprocal semantic differences among three languages—Ll, IL and L2, such data would become a part of the data-bank for universal grammar. Furthermore, when interlanguage analysis developed, those accumulated data are likely to be useful in discovering and verifying the universal process of language acquisition common to the learning of various language.

Finally, as a summary statement, I would like to say that language is inherently organic and social-psychological gestalt. Henceforth, in order to make the teaching of second or foreign language more successful, it is necessary to put interlanguage analysis in practice, aiming at the error of more difficult items than anything else in language learning. It

is because if the nature of persistent errors comes clear to us, we could obtain from those findings some useful implications for foreign language teaching, and the domain that we can explain on the language would probably be expandable as well. However, clarifying the process of second or foreign language acquisition will take us years of labor and need interdisciplinary studies. When we get on with this analysis and follow the beaten track, the results would be fruitful to illuminate the real entity of human language acquisition.

My personal studies by this approach would become only one cell of the big research body in the future. I hope, from this time on, many more attempts by this approach follow one after another concerning various items of two languages in contrast throughout the world.

"Art is I, but science is we."

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